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NAVY MEDICINE IN FOCUS

Fixing the Machines that Fix People

BY PROSS – NOVEMBER 18, 2013

POSTED IN: NEWS



HM2 Gregory Young (right) instructs HN Ryan Warrick on repair procedures for a piece of medical equipment at Naval Hospital Pensacola. Sailors getting ready for the Biomedical school are highly encouraged to receive training with the Biomedical Department to assist with the transition from patient care to equipment care. (Photo by Jason Bortz)

By Petty Officer First Class James Stenberg, Naval Hospital Pensacola

PENSACOLA, Fla. – During a trip to Naval Hospital Pensacola (NHP), patients can see a multitude of doctors, nurses, corpsmen and volunteers. What they don't often see are the group of biomedical equipment technicians that have stopped seeing patients and now service the equipment that helps care for patients.

Biomedical equipment technicians assemble, maintain, troubleshoot, align and calibrate medical equipment for the hospital. They service all types of medical equipment for various departments such as radiology, laboratory, dental and surgery.

"[Biomedical] is the maintenance, repair and calibration of all medical equipment," said Hospital Corpsman Second Class Gregory Young, assistant leading petty officer of the Biomedical Department. "We work on everything from MRI machines all the way down to something as minor as a scale or a thermometer."

With the advances in medical technology, almost everything in a hospital is mechanical in some way. Having personnel on staff that are able to troubleshoot and repair problems that may occur with that equipment saves the hospital time and money. Without the maintenance and repair of the equipment, the hospital is unable to function at its full capabilities.

"We go around and do performance checks on everything," said Young. "We replace any parts that need to be replaced, update any software that needs to be updated and do repairs. If anything breaks, we are the first line of repair."

Unlike some other hospital specialties, biomedical technicians are corpsmen who have volunteered to no longer see patients and instead have been selected to work on the equipment that is used for patient care.

"To me, fixing the equipment is not really different than treating the patient," said Hospitalman Ryan Warrick, with the Biomedical Department. "We treat the equipment as if it were a patient. We have to get it fixed and back out there as quickly as possible and with care. The faster we get that done, the faster [the hospital] can take care of

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patients.”

Working alongside the technicians at NHP are corpsmen waiting to be accepted into the Biomedical Equipment Technician course at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio. All of these Sailors receive on-the-job training as a means to assist the staff with being able to meet the needs of the hospital as well as getting training that will help them in the 41-week course.

“Right now I’m getting ready for school,” said Warrick, “and the [on-the-job training] helps me a lot because I get to work with the equipment [before going to school].”

Having qualified personnel on hand and ready to repair medical equipment allows NHP to continue giving its beneficiaries the best medical care available.



HN Ryan Warrick checks the cord on a piece of medical equipment that is in the Biomedical Department for repair. Naval Hospital Pensacola’s Biomedical Department is the first response for all medical equipment maintenance and repair for NHP and its clinics. (Photo by Jason Bortz)

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